Swarthmore Lecture

# Silent Worship

L. Violet Hodgkin

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*THE LISTENING ANGEL.*
*From Southwell Cathedral.*

The Swarthmore Lecture, 1919

# SILENT WORSHIP:
## THE WAY OF WONDER

BY

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*Author of "A Book of Quaker Saints," &c.*

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# Preface

The Swarthmore Lectureship was established by the Woodbrooke Extension Committee, at a meeting held December 9th, 1907: the minute of the Committee providing for "an annual lecture on some subject relating to the message and work of the Society of Friends." The name "Swarthmore" was chosen in memory of the home of Margaret Fox, which was always open to the earnest seeker after Truth, and from which loving words of sympathy and substantial material help were sent to fellow-workers.

The Lectureship has a two-fold purpose: first, to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their Message and Mission; and, secondly, to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the Friends.

The Lectures have been delivered on the evening preceding the assembly of the Friends' Yearly Meeting in each year.

A complete list of the Lectures, as published in book form, will be found at the beginning of this volume.

"And as the flowing of the ocean fills
Each creek and branch thereof, and then retires,
Leaving behind a sweet and wholesome savour ;
So doth the virtue and the life of God
Flow evermore into the hearts of those
Whom He hath made partakers of His nature ;
And, when it but withdraws itself a little,
Leaves a sweet savour after it, that many
Can say they are made clean by every word
That He hath spoken to them in their silence."

. . . . .

"Truly, we do but grope here in the dark,
Near the partition-wall of Life and Death,
At every moment dreading or desiring
To lay our hands upon the unseen door !
Let us, then, labour for an inward stillness,—
An inward stillness and an inward healing ;
That perfect silence, where the lips and heart
Are still, and we no longer entertain
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,
But God alone speaks in us, and we wait
In singleness of heart, that we may know
His will, and in the silence of our spirits,
That we may do His will, and do that only."

H. W. Longfellow,
*New England Tragedies.*

Swarthmore Lecture, 1919.

# SILENT WORSHIP:

## THE WAY OF WONDER.

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"Look with wonder at that which is before you."

"Let not him that seeks cease until he find.
When he finds, he shall wonder;
When he wonders, he shall reign;
And when he reigns, he shall rest."

In this mysterious double "Saying" of our Lord the germ of silent worship lies hidden.

First the Command: not to work, nor to doubt, nor to question, but to watch, to marvel, to adore.

Next, the Experience: seeking, finding, reigning, resting; a pair of attributes active and passive, on either side of this central act and attitude of wonder. Such is the demand that this *Logion*[1] makes upon its hearers who, as they surrender themselves to its claim, will discover afresh its divinity.

[1] See Note A. (p. 91).

There may be innumerable other ways of worship for other pilgrims, but we know that this is the one appointed to us, the intimate communion of spirit in which, unitedly and as a body, we seek in stillness to " look with wonder at that which is before us," and, thus wondering, to reign and to rest.

Silent worship,—our familiar yet mysterious Way of Wonder,—whence it came to us from the dim hills of the past; how it is leading us over dusty plains and through tangled thickets in the present; and whither, to what mist-shrouded, sun-suffused heights of the future :— this is the subject of our quest.

There is a danger that those of us who were born Friends may overlook the wonder, the mystery, of this silent way of ours, just because we know it too well. We rarely feel that we are treading anything beyond everyday streets and pavements, or country lanes, as we walk to meeting. However far back we probe into our consciousness we can never remember a time when thus to gather together in stillness with other seekers was not, for us, the familiar entrance, the inevitable approach, to the Presence Chamber of GOD.

Yet this is really an astonishing thing to do.

And therefore it is well that we, whose sense of wonder at this wordless intercourse of spirits —human and Divine—has been blurred by long familiarity, should have that sense requickened by new companions to whom silent worship, instead of being a habit, is still a rich surprise. The joy these later partakers in it find in our silence has reassured us that our inheritance is no mere curious heirloom, venerable, though useless to all save the members of one small spiritual family; but is, rather, a priceless possession for world-wide present and future needs.

"How did George Fox discover your silence? Where did he find it? When did he first use it? Was this use of silence his own invention? Has it grown and developed since his time? Was it practised by him and by the early Friends in exactly the same way as it is among you to-day? And, if it has altered, in what directions?" These questions, asked by my friend Cyril Hepher in 1916, first showed me how little I knew of the history of our way of worship. Part of the answer to them was supplied by the well-known passages in George Fox's *Journal* telling how, as a young man, he kept himself "sometimes retired in his chamber and

often walked "solitary in Barnet Chace to wait upon the Lord," and how, a few years later, at a "great meeting" of priests and professors, he "sat on a haystack and spoke nothing for some hours, . . . to famish them from words." [1]

From these we went on to Robert Barclay's sentences in the *Apology* : [2] "A man may learn more in half an hour and be more certain of it by waiting upon God and His Spirit in the heart than by reading 1000 volumes . . . for when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them that touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good reached to, and raised . . . in that inward quietness, stillness and humility of mind where the Lord appears and His heavenly wisdom is revealed."

Nevertheless the more insistent questions as to the growth and development, the origin and history of silent worship remained unanswered and a fruitful subject for enquiry.

In a short hour's lecture it is impossible to do more than hint at the various stages, but let us glance first at—

[1] See *infra*, p. 48. [2] *Apology*, xi. 21. 23. and xi. 7.

THE EARLIER USE OF SILENCE.

(A) In Other Religions.

(B) In the Christian Church.

i. In the Mass.

ii. Monastic Communities (Compulsory Silence).

iii. Individual Mystics (Free Silence).

(C) Among Philosophers and Heretics

Next let us concentrate on

THE HISTORY OF QUAKER SILENCE.

(A) Its Roots.

i. On the Continent, in France, Germany and the Low Countries.

ii. In England, among Familists, Seekers, etc.

(B) Its Main Stem.

i. Experiences of Fox and the early Friends.

ii. Theories concerning these—Barclay, Penington, Penn.

(C) Its Degeneration in later times, Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century.

(D) And Revival. Later Nineteenth Century.

Lastly, in conclusion, let us look at PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES OF SILENT WORSHIP.

(A) Its Dangers.
- i. Fragility.
- ii. Wordiness.
- iii. Failure to " Arrive."

(B) Its Future Hopes.
- i. Central Appeal to the Will.
- ii. Hope of Re-union.
- iii. The Upper Room.

The first division of our subject is too vast and complicated for me to attempt to treat it in detail. I can only offer a few scattered examples in proof of the widespread use of silence in other religions. Some of these I have come across in my own reading. Others have been generously sent to me by more scholarly friends, who are able to go much further afield—and who are also interested in the history of silent worship.

More than three thousand years ago, in the religious life of ancient Egypt, " the attitude of silent communion, waiting upon the gracious goodness of God, was not confined to the select few nor to the educated, priestly communities.

On the humblest monuments of the common people Amon is called the 'god who cometh to the silent, or the lord of the silent, who cometh at the cry of the poor,'"[1] and again, "Thou sweet Well for him that thirsteth in the desert, it is closed to him that speaks, but is open to him that is silent. When he who is silent comes, Lo he finds the Well!"[2]

In the changeless East it is said that "The Hindu still looks with pity on our extravagant activities and reckless thought . . . which take us ever further from the Absolute, the True, the Unspeakable, the Repose, the Great Silence, upon whose unmoving bosom the tiniest scratchings which make up our earthly silence, transpire, are born, and pass."[3]

The Buddhist religion, on the other hand, attempts to unite all these distant regions within the breast of a silent worshipper, in the practice of "the art of pervasion, whereby the silent votary contemplates in turn every quarter of the globe with active love."

[1] *Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, by J. H. Breasted, Ph.D.

[2] See Note B. (p. 91).

[3] P. N. Waggett—Introduction to *The House of Wisdom and Love.*

Silence could never be alien from worship to the devout Hebrew, whose Scriptures showed " in the beginning " an earliest æonian silence of the Spirit brooding upon the waters, broken only by the " first tremendous Fiat of GOD."

Even in the later, ornate days of the Jewish religion more than one trace of silent worship remains. The Talmud states that " companies of angels praise by night but are silent by day because of the glories of the Eternal." It also mentions that : " The former Chasidim " (*i.e.* the predecessors of the Pharisees about the Maccabæan period) " used to sit still one hour and then pray one hour and then sit still for one hour."

The idea formerly held that the word " Selah " in the Psalms preserves the memory of a similar hush or pause for silent prayer, is denied by modern scholarship. The importance of silence in the Jewish conception of worship is shown, however, in several places, notably in the Prophet's exclamation : " The Lord is in His Holy Temple : let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Hab. ii. 20).

Memorable also is the record of the utter silence in which the Temple buildings themselves had been scrupulously fashioned. " And the house when it was in building was

built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building" (1 Kings vi. 7).

Not only from Judæa, however, also from ancient Greece, come some of the most significant traces of the use of silence in the life and worship of pre-Christian times.

The Pythagoreans are known to have practised silence. "Stop chatter and take to learning" was one of the injunctions of Pythagoras himself, and he "was wont to set every student a task of lengthened silence," in order that "by the fermentation of his thoughts he might be the better prepared for his master's teaching."

In the *Symposium* Socrates is said, on one occasion, to have remained wrapped in thought from early dawn throughout a whole day and night, with a wondering crowd around him. "There he stood till the following morning; and with the return of light he offered up a prayer to the sun, and went his way."[1]

But the most significant example of silence in worship is found in the heart of ancient Greece, in the Mysteries of Eleusis, those shrouded rites of cleansing, of initiation, of death in

[1] Plato. *Sympos.*, 220.

life, of life out of death, that seem almost like a strange foreshadowing of Christianity.

At sunrise, on a certain day in every year, a throng of chosen worshippers issued forth from the City of the Violet Crown. Leaving Athens, they passed out from under the luminous shadow of its pillared temples and wandered on all through the daylight hours along the Sacred Way, that ancient Way of Wonder, across the plain of Attica and over the dim blue hills to Eleusis. The sun was already setting as the long procession wound round the still waters of the land-locked bay of Salamis; not until nightfall did the pilgrims reach their goal, the Temple of the Two Goddesses at Eleusis. We know that here in summer's ardent heats, the chosen came for initiation; but of what the Mysteries themselves consisted, what secrets of essential being they both symbolised and unveiled, can only be guessed now from the scattered hints that have come down to us from illuminated votaries, pledged to secrecy in regard to the essential points of their experience. The Greeks, in their wisdom, knew full well that

> "If the chosen soul could never be alone,
> In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
> No greatness ever had been dreamed or done."[1]

[1] *Columbus*, J. R. Lowell.

Therefore they took every precaution that life's deepest lessons should be learned, and kept, in secret, in darkness, in hiddenness, and in silence.[1]

Only after three days of purification, of prayer, and of solitary ordeals, did the central and most representative event of the Mysteries take place. This was enacted not in the inmost chambers of hidden secret things but with a sudden blaze of light in full sight of the assembled multitude.[2] Every soul present was

[1] Even the name μύστης given to the Greek initiate, "probably arose from the fact that he was one who was gaining a knowledge of divine things, about which he must keep his mouth shut. (μύω means close lips or eyes). It is from this word that our "mystic" and "mysticism" are derived: thus the connection between mysticism and silence is far from being superficial or arbitrary."—C. F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature.*

[2] At Eleusis "there was probably no dogmatic teaching, there were possibly no words spoken, it was all an acted parable. But it was all kept in silence. There was an awful individuality about it. They [the initiates] saw the sight in common, but they saw it each man for himself. It was his personal communion with the Divine life. The effect of it was conceived to be a change both of character and of relation to the Gods. The initiated were, by virtue of their initiation, made partakers of a world to come. 'Thrice happy they who go to the world below having seen these mysteries; to them alone is life there, to others all is misery.'" (Sophocles, *Fragm.* 348.)

E. Hatch. *Hibbert Lectures*, 1888.

The initiates "were bound to make their life on earth correspond to their initiation. In later times it was supposed even to make them better." (*Ibid.*)

drawn into rapt communion and participation, every eye was focussed to witness and to partake in the symbol of one divine act, every heart bowed to adore "the great, the wonderful, the most perfect object of mystical contemplation,—an ear of wheat reaped in silence."[1]

In spite of the difference of outward ceremonial there is a true inward connection[2] between this mystical spell of silence cast over the worshipping multitude in the dark Hall of Initiation, and the hush of utter stillness that unites the congregation in a dim, candle-lit Christian Church, at the culminating moment of the Sacrament of the Mass, when the tinkle of a silver bell calls the worshippers to adore in silence[3], not one gathered ear of wheat, as in Eleusis of old, but the broken Bread itself: "My body, given for you."

[1] "The Greeks of old knew that silence is not a negative but a positive thing. There is never a complete vacuum of stillness but only a hushing of the more dominant sounds. The silence of a northern night and of a southern noon; the silence of a forest, a moor, a sea: what resemblance is there between them, and how are they related to this silence of a worshipping multitude who came to Eleusis to learn—so an inscription tells us—'the fair and joyful truth that death is not an evil but a blessing to mortals.'"—E. S. Bosanquet. *Days in Attica.*

[2] See Note C, (p. 92).

[3] It is true that in the Roman Liturgy there is no outward pause in the swift succession of words and of

In the *Didaché* or *Teaching of the Apostles*, a fragment dating from very early, if not from sub-apostolic times, the following words of meditation form part of the actual Giving-of-thanks :

> " But with regard to the broken bread: We give thanks to Thee, Our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou hast made known to us through Thy Child Jesus, to Thee be glory for ever.
>
> " As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, and being gathered together became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom. . . . But after being

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dramatic actions accompanying them, beyond the direction to the priest " *genuflexus adorat* " and this " adoration " is now usually interpreted as a rapid genuflection rather than a pause. But so far as the people are concerned the Roman Mass is generally said in silence, that is inaudibly, almost *in toto*. Therefore, as it is commonly said, it is *in effect* largely a service of silent fellowship directed by symbolic acts, which in silence convey a well understood succession of thought and devotion.

In the liturgy of St. James there is a call to silence: " Let all mortal flesh keep silence . . . for the King of Kings cometh . . ." In the Good Friday services of the Roman and Sarum Missals a relic of ancient silence is preserved. There follows " Let us kneel,—Let us arise," and a collect which gathers up the prayer of the silent interval. I owe this interesting information to Cyril Hepher.

> filled, give thanks thus: . . . . Remember O Lord, Thy Church to deliver her from all evil, and to perfect her in Thy love, and gather her together from the four winds, her the sanctified, into Thy Kingdom which Thou preparedst for her; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever."

Thus, from the earliest days of Christian worship, silent adoration, thanksgiving, and the prayer for unity have been woven into one.

At first, however, the Way of Wonder was discovered less often by pilgrim spirits travelling in company than by separate souls journeying alone. If silence be the true road to unity it must first unite each separate soul with its unseen Leader and with the cloud of witnesses within the Veil, before the consciousness of this timeless union can bind together the variegated minds and hearts of those who at any one period happen to be visibly journeying together on earth. This track through the thick wood of material things is not easy to find. The footsteps of many lonely pioneers, wandering in solitude, were necessary before the path became broad enough for associated pilgrims to tread together through the centuries. Thus the

earliest records of the use of silence are often in connection with solitary prayer.

Clement of Alexandria[1] commends this form of worship above that of the congregation, when he says that the righteous man " will pray aloud sharing the common petitions of the faithful which are the true incense composed of many tongues and voices; or preferably he will pray silently without utterance, speaking in his heart to GOD."

A prayer attributed to Saint Ambrose says: " Let thy good Spirit enter into my heart, and there be heard without utterance, and without the sound of words speak all truth."[2]

It is recorded also that the disciples of Saint Dionysius asked him why one of their number, named Timotheus, surpassed them all in perfection. Then said Dionysius, " Timotheus is receptive of GOD."[3]

The unknown writer of the fifth century who preserves this story is indeed one of our true spiritual forerunners on this pathway, for silence, wonder (or adoration) and receptivity

[1] In the *Stromata;* see *Life of Clement of Alexandria*, vol. ii. p.93, by H. B. Tollinton.

[2] Quoted in *Mysticism*, by E. Underhill, p.328.

[3] Eckhart, *Pred.* 11.

are only different names for the same attitude of the soul.

Very early in the Christian centuries, however, the way of silent worship bifurcated. Blessed and acknowledged by the Catholic Church it became on the one hand a broad highway shut in by high walls, roofed over, paved underfoot, in the compulsory silence enjoined by the great monastic communities.

Benedictines, Cistercians, Carthusians, Trappists; the soul of silence echoes through the names, or rather seems to reverberate through interminable corridors haunted by noiseless footsteps. Yet that there was both a true listening silence and a true speaking of the Inward Voice in some of these isolated cells is shown abundantly by many of the messages that have issued thence.

Listen to this fragment from an old English Carthusian, writing in the reign of King Henry VI:

> "The secret voice of Jesus," he says" is full true, and it maketh a soul true, there is no feigning in it, nor fancy, pride or hypocrisy; but gentleness, humility, peace, love and charity: it is full of life, love and grace. And therefore when it soundeth in a soul,

> it is of so great power sometimes, that the soul suddenly layeth aside all that was in hand, as praying, speaking, reading or thinking, and all manner of outward work, and wholly listeneth thereto, hearing and perceiving in rest and in love the sweet sound of this spiritual voice, being as it were ravished from all earthly things."[1]

The exquisite " Listening Angel " of Southwell Cathedral[2] seems the expression of these words carved in stone, showing the same rapt stillness of soul in those who, amid all the splendours of the earlier worship, yet understood the secret of silence and stole apart to hearken to the Inner Voice. Is it not this same attitude of alert listening for the Voice of God that our own age needs, not indeed to carve in lifeless stone but to impress upon the living spirits of its men and women ?

In the words of the great Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross, " The Eternal Father has spoken one word which is the Son, and He speaks it still in an Eternal Silence ; the soul must listen to it in a like silence."

[1] Quoted in a curious old book *A Tour through Holland and Flanders*, written by Cornelius Cayley in 1777, p.81.

[2] See Frontispiece.

This listening instinct is at the centre of all silent worship whether fettered or free. This compelling instinct drove the hermits of the Thebaid—those first silent communities—apart into the burning solitudes of the desert[1]; and this instinct again prompted innumerable anchorites and hermits of after times to immure themselves within the narrow self-chosen limits of their cells.[2]

The "so-called Hierotheus," a Syrian monk of the fourth century, says: "To me it seems right to speak without words, and understand without knowledge, that which is above words and knowledge. This I apprehend to be nothing but the mysterious silence and mystical quiet which . . . dissolves forms. Seek, therefore, silently and mystically, that perfect and primitive union with the Arch-Good."[3]

Yet this ascetic monastic silence has dangers of its own. It is not without humours too, dangers and humours that are both shown in

[1] The Arabic name for the desert is "The place where He is all."

[2] "Those first hermits did certainly understand this principle when they retired into Egyptian solitudes, not singly, but in shoals, to enjoy one another's want of conversation."—*A Quakers' Meeting*, by Charles Lamb.

[3] *Christian Mysticism*, by W. R. Inge, p.103.

the, probably apocryphal, legend of the three anchoresses who agreed to live together under a vow of perpetual silence. At the end of the first year the first anchoress broke silence by saying: "This is a beautiful year after all."

At the end of the second year the second anchoress replied to the remark made the previous year by saying: "It is indeed."

Not until the end of the third year did the third anchoress break silence with the words: "If you women go on chattering like this I shall go out into the world again!"

Nevertheless, whatever its dangers, this compulsory silence, whether in solitude or in communities, has endured throughout the centuries. Apart in narrow grottos and cells or else standardised into a pattern behind high conventual walls, this silent pathway still exists, rigid and dumb it may be, yet a way, although not our way, to the Celestial City, apart from the hubbub of the modern Vanity Fair.

In Fogazzaro's powerful modern novel *Il Santo* there is a memorable scene when two passionate human souls, after long tragedy and separation, find themselves once again face to face in the corridor of a monastery, where upon

the white walls "there was inscribed in large black letters the word:

SILENTIUM.

"For centuries, ever since that word was first written, no human voice had been heard there, within those walls. The great, black, imperial word, heavy with shadows and with death, triumphed over the two human souls, while outside the fury of the cataract and the storm bellowed against it in vain."

"The great, black, imperial word, heavy with shadows and death"—such may be the compulsory silence of the cloister. Our Way of Wonder does not lie here. To find it we must go back in thought to an earlier, freer time, when the silence of even the holiest saints was not shut up within stone walls but was fresh and out-of-doors and filled with sunlight.

Think of that fragrant silence described by Saint Augustine in the *Confessions*, when he and his mother Monica were "at Ostia by Tiber" recruiting themselves for the sea voyage.[1]

"As the day drew near," he says, "on which she was to depart from this life; Thou knewest it, though we did not; it fell out, as I believe, through the secret workings of Thy

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 10.

providence, that she and I were leaning by ourselves on the ledge of a certain window from which we looked down on the garden of our house. . . . Sweet was the converse we held together. We were discussing . . . of what kind would be the eternal life of the saints, which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. . . . And as our talk was leading us thither where we would be . . . we soared with a more glowing emotion to that 'Self-same,' we wandered step by step through all material things, and even the very heaven whence sun and moon and stars shed their light upon the earth. And still higher did we climb by the staircase of the Spirit, thinking and speaking of Thee, and marvelling at Thy works. And so we came to our own minds and passed beyond them into the region of unfailing plenty where 'the Life Itself' is, as it was and shall be evermore because in it is neither past nor future but present only, for it is eternal. . . . And as we talked and yearned after it, we touched it for an instant with the whole force of our hearts. . . .

"We said then 'If the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed these shadows of earth,

sea and sky; hushed too the heavens, and if the very soul should be hushed to itself, so that it should pass beyond itself and not think of itself; if all dreams were hushed and every tongue and every symbol; if all transitory things were hushed utterly—suppose we heard His word without any intermediary at all—just now we reached out and with one flash of thought touched the Eternal Wisdom that abides above all.'—*Suppose this endured,* . . . might not eternal life be like this moment of comprehension for which we sighed?"

This "moment of comprehension" reached by two human souls in perfect harmony with each other is like the perfect attunement of two musical instruments soaring together and resting in a pause of completed harmony as the highest note dies away into silence.

Yet, perfect as it is, this double silence is only the prelude to the full orchestral silence of a whole fellowship, waiting to be revealed in later days. But the hour for that was not yet come.

Nine centuries after that sunset evening at Ostia another double silence of comprehension has left an ineffaceable mark on the page of

history. Here again the silence is of two souls only—united in this case neither by any fleshly tie, nor by the memories of a life-time of shared sorrows and joys, but known to each other by spiritual sympathy alone and united in one silent embrace. In the *Little Flowers of St. Francis* the story is told how, after the death of Francis, St. Louis, King of France, came disguised as a Pilgrim to visit Brother Giles in his convent at Perugia. But it had been revealed to Brother Giles that the seeming pilgrim was the King of France, wherefore he "left his cell in haste and ran to the gate without asking any questions. They knelt down and embraced each other with great reverence and many outward signs of love, as if a long friendship had existed between them, though they had never met before in their lives. Neither of them spoke a word, and after remaining clasped in each other's arms for some time they separated in silence."

Later, when the other brothers learned who the seemingly humble Pilgrim had been, they reproached Brother Giles bitterly for his silence; to whom Brother Giles answered, "Beloved Brothers, be not surprised at this, as neither I could say a word to him nor he to me, for no

sooner had we embraced each other than . . we saw into each other's hearts and knew far better what we had to say than if we had explained in words what we had experienced in our souls. The tongue of man reveals so imperfectly the secret mysteries of God, that words would have been to us rather a hindrance than a consolation."

"Let not him that seeks cease until he find," true at Ostia, true at Perugia, still true to-day. "When he finds he shall wonder, when he wonders he shall reign, when he reigns he shall rest."

The "Prayer of Quiet" of Teresa of Avila, the Spanish warrior saint, is different both from the hush of Ostia, and from the embrace at Perugia, but it is another link in the chain, another stage on the long journey.

Teresa, though herself a professed nun, knew intimately both the free and the compulsory forms of silence. In her own experience and out of her own early spiritual struggles she had discovered the need for what she calls "passive prayer" or "mental retirement." In this prayer she distinguishes four stages,[1]

[1] Rev. Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, vol. II. p. 673, *et seq.*

(1) Holy Meditation, (2) Prayer of Quiet, (3) Repose of the Soul, and (4) Prayer of Union. For, as she truly observes, "the servants of divine love arrive not on a sudden at the highest degree of prayer." In later life, when, as prioress of a convent, Teresa was herself in a position to direct the devotions of others, she declared "assiduous prayer, silence, close retirement and penance to be the four pillars of the spiritual edifice she had raised."[1] "Settle yourselves in solitude," she says to those "dear daughters" of hers whom she entreats to be "valiant men"—"and you will come upon God in yourselves . . . Those who can in this manner shut themselves up in the little heaven of their own hearts, where He dwells who made heaven and earth, let them be sure that they walk in the most excellent way; they lay their pipe right up to the fountain." "God never withholds Himself from him who pays this price and who perseveres in seeking Him." "God is the soul of my soul," she declares in another passage, "He engulfs Himself into my soul."

All seeking souls are one upon this way. Not only have the great saints and mystics of

[1] *Ibid*, 688.

the Church carried the Silent Way of Wonder on towards its goal, those

> " shining table-lands
> To which our God Himself is moon and sun ";

we owe our Way of Worship also to the philosophers and to the heretics. Among the former, Sir Thomas More notes unity, gentleness and *silence* as characteristic of the worship of the Utopians.

" For King Utopus," he says . . . " hearing that the inhabitants of the land were before his coming thither at continual dissension and strife among themselves for their religion . . . made a decree that it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring the other to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, gently, quietly and soberly, without hasty and contentious rebuking and inveighing against others . . . This law did King Utopus make not only for the maintenance of peace, . . but also because he thought this decree should make for the furtherance of religion. Whereof he durst define and determine nothing unadvisedly as doubting whether GOD desiring manifold and divers sorts of honour, would

inspire sundry men with sundry kinds of religion."

In Utopia " they have priests of exceeding holiness and therefore very few," not only men but women, " for that kind is not excluded from the priesthood, howbeit few be chosen and none but widows or old women."

" Religion and devotion," we read, " are not there of one sort among all men, and yet all the kinds and fashions of it, though they be sundry and manifold, agree together in the honour of the divine nature, as going divers ways to one end." . . . In the Churches " no prayers be used but such as every man may boldly pronounce without the offending of any sect . . . When they come thither, the men go into the right side of the church and the women into the left side. When the priest first cometh out of the vestry . . . they fall down . . . every one reverently to the ground with so still silence on every part that the very fashion of the thing striketh unto them a certain fear of God, as though He were there personally present." [1]

In the atmosphere of courts and philosophers worship in silence and in unity such as is here described was, even in the sixteenth century, an

[1] *Utopia*, Bk. II.

exotic. It could only grow and flourish *in Utopia.*

Yet, more than three centuries before, far humbler folk than the Tudor Chancellor had transplanted the same rare plant with success into the spiritual soil of their own homes and had actually cultivated it successfully in practice. In Paris, in 1209, the first Society was formed of people who believed in " the actual reign of the Holy Spirit *now* within the hearts of men " and who cultivated silence in order to discover the Inward Presence, " the joy of finding themselves free in GOD, and of feeling His life palpitate within their own being."[1]

But this little company of practical Utopians were given a harsher name by the ecclesiastical authorities of their day: they were broken up and exterminated as heretics, those who proved " obstinate " being put to the stake " without showing any sign of repentance " for their supposed sin of heresy.

" Heresy? At the word I see a long, keen line of Light, the Very Truth, borne down the highway of the ages by their hands, those whom the Church has called Heretics and made into Schismatics."[2]

[1] R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 180.

[2] E. Waterhouse. *Thoughts of a Tertiary.*

In the fourteenth century the pathway of these heretical pilgrims begins to broaden. The "long, keen line of light" they carry illuminates first Germany and the Low Countries and then—like a revolving searchlight—is borne across the stormy waters of the North Sea until at last it rests on England.

In Germany the beginnings of united silent worship are found, about 1350, among the "Friends of God," and other like-minded communities in their "quiet nests."

"They hear," says one of them "in their own souls what they are to speak."[1] Simplicity of language is one of the distinguishing marks of this higher state of immediate revelation, which was known as "the upper school of the Holy Ghost," in which "the scholars speak only in words of one syllable." Here, as in many later instances, the use of silence in worship accompanies the very small stress that is laid on sacraments, or, rather, the very great stress that is laid on their spiritual significance.

"If the Holy Church wishes to deprive us of the external sacrament, we must submit,"[2] writes Tauler, one of the best known of these

[1] R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 259.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 275.

early " Friends of God," " but nobody can take from us the privilege of taking the sacrament spiritually."

Throughout the ages, those spirits who could surrender themselves to it, seem to have found in the unity of a silent gathering that which other, differently constituted, souls have found in the Sacrament of the Altar,—the true Holy Communion ;—the meeting-place of the human spirit with the divine ; the perception, through the temporal, of the eternal.

Tauler's Master in this silent way was Eckhart, " the profoundest of all German mystics," as he has been called.[1] Of him an old scribe wrote : " This is that Meister Eckhart from whom God kept nothing hid." Eckhart describes the crown of all true worship—silent or sacramental —in the simplest words :—

> " Thou needst not call Him to thee from a distance ; thy opening and His entering are but one moment : it is harder for Him to wait, than for thee."

Thus in their communities on either side of the Rhine, the French spirituals of the early thirteenth century as well as these German Friends of God in their " quiet nests " in the

[1] *Ibid*, p. 224.

middle of the fourteenth, are among the earliest heralds of the dawn of a new day.

Two centuries later another group of spiritual reformers pressed on further along the same path in later morning light. These were Denck, Schwenckfeld, Weigel and many others whose names even had been forgotten, until our Friend, Rufus Jones, rescued the separate threads from the relentless roller Oblivion (to use the imagery of the old Norse legend), and unfolded their lives and thoughts afresh in vivid colours. In his volume, *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, he clearly shows that though their names may have been forgotten, their spirits are in harmony both with one another and with many greater mystics, whose love of united silence they also share.

"I cannot belong to any separate sect," writes one of the earliest of them, "but I believe in a holy, Christ-like church, a fellowship of saints, and I hold as my brother, my neighbour, my flesh and blood, all men who belong to Christ among all sects, faiths and peoples, scattered throughout the whole world."[1] Yet it was the writer's "ideal purpose to promote the formation

[1] *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, R. M. Jones, p. 52.

of little groups of spiritual Christians which should live in the land in quietness and spread by an inward power and inspiration received from above."[1] They believed that "all spiritual service arises through the definite call and commission of God, and the persons so called and commissioned are rightly prepared for their service, not by election and ordination but by inward compulsion and illumination through the Word of God."

These "*stillen Frommen*" or "quiet spirituals" "formed a little meeting,—in every respect like a seventeenth century Quaker meeting—in their own homes, meeting about in turn, discarding all use of sacraments, and waiting on God for edification rather than on public preaching.[2] . . They sought and found a transfigured life,' a radiant life,' 'a joy which spreads through the inward spirit and shines on the face,—a joy which can turn even hard exile into a *Ruhe-schloss*, a castle of peace.'"[3]

But these "*stillen Frommen*" were before their time. "They were eventually discovered, their leaders banished, their books burned, and their little meeting of 'quiet spirituals' ruthlessly stamped out. Societies something

[1] *Ibid*, p. 82. [2] *Ibid*, p. 83. [3] *Ibid*, p. 72.

like this were formed in scores of places, and continued to cultivate their inward piety in the Fatherland until, harried by persecution, they migrated in 1734 to Pennsylvania, where they have continued to maintain their community life until the present day,"[1] doubtless to the Fatherland's irreparable spiritual loss.

A little later than the *stillen Frommen* very similar views and teaching spread to Holland where another small society was formed under the name of the Collegium.[2] Its members refused to fight even in self-defence, would not take oaths, or even acquiesce in punishments inflicted by civil law. They chose the Sermon on the Mount as their one guide and tried to follow its precepts literally. They sought to keep the Sabbath, not in a ceremonial or legal sense but in " an inward quiet, a prevailing peace of soul, a rest in the life of God from strain and stress and passion." " They rejected the Supper as an ecclesiastical ceremony but they highly prized it as an occasion for fellowship and group worship." " They encouraged the custom of silent waiting in their gatherings as a prepar-

[1] *Ibid*, p 83.

[2] *Spiritual Reformers*, Chap. vii.; and *Beginnings of Quakerism*, by W. C. Braithwaite, p. 410.

ation for 'openings.' At the same time they did not undervalue the spoken word. One of the original members declared that 'he should fear the loss of his salvation if he failed in a meeting to give utterance to the Word of God revealed to him in his inner being.'"

Here at last is our true Way emerging broad and clear. Not an anchorite's cell in the desert under the burning Libyan sun; not compulsory silence behind monastic walls; not the constant repetition of "hammered words," or forms of prayer, however ancient, however hallowed by association and use; not the preaching of "conned and gathered stuff," but the ever-new miracle, the birth of living words from the depths of living silence: this, these obscure Collegiants had surely found.

And not they alone. This form of worship, or something similar to it, was at that time— as we should say now— "in the air."

In this same sixteenth century there arose, also in Holland, the sect of the "Family of Love" whose founder, Henry Nicholas, laid stress on the necessity for "quiet waiting in silence." "Grow up in stillness and singleness of heart," he says, "praying for a right sight in the truth, for that shall make you free." He

urges his Family "to break spiritual bread together *in stillness*, abiding steadfast in prayer, till all covering wherewith their hearts, after the flesh, are covered is done away, that is to say until the spiritual, heavenly, and uncovered being of Christ appears and comes to their spirit."[1]

These Familists, as the followers of Nicholas were called, seem to have been for the most part humble folk, since the chief elders among them were described as "weavers, basket-makers, musicians, bottle-makers and such like." They were already to be found in England in the middle of the sixteenth century. "They swarm and dayly increase in the Isle of Ely" writes a Cambridge M.A. in 1579.[2]

Although another of their opponents declares that "the errors of the sect be so foull and so filthy, as would force the very penne in passing to stay and stop her nose," nothing seems to have been proved against them beyond their tenets which were said, a century later, to be a sort of "refined Quakerism."

They insisted first of all upon a "deep inward experience" or discovery of God in the soul.

[1] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 439.

[2] *Ibid*, 443.

"The true Light," said Nicholas, "is the everlasting life itself and shows itself through illuminated, *i.e.*, *godded* men, for through such persons the Most High is *manned* [incarnated.]

"In addition . . . the Familist rejected oaths and war, and capital punishment, and his position towards the Bible and towards outward rites and ceremonies was substantially the same as that taken by Friends. Moreover, like Fox, Nicholas made much of quiet waiting in silence."[1]

"The congregation does not speak until admitted to do so. . . They may not say 'God speed, God morrow, or God even' . . . When a question is demanded of any they stay a great while ere they answer, and commonly their word shall be 'Surely' or 'So' . . . They bragge verie much of their own sincere lives, saying 'marke how purelie we live.'"[2]

"These people were called Seekers by some, and the Family of Love by others," writes William Penn, but this identification of the two sects seems hardly correct, since the Familists' headquarters remained in the Isle of Ely, whereas the 'Seekers' were to be found in small groups

[1] *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 23.

[2] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 441.

and companies in various parts of England. Yet that they were nearly allied to one another is shown by Penn's further description of both. "As they [the Seekers] came to the knowledge of one another, they sometimes met together, not formally to pray or preach, at appointed times and places, in their own wills, as in times past they were accustomed to do, but waited together in silence, and as anything rose in any one of their minds that they thought favoured a divine spring, so they sometimes spoke."

Compare the following extract from Charles Marshall's journal :

"And in those times, viz., about the year 1654, there were many in those parts who were seeking after the Lord, and there were a few of us who kept one day in the week for fasting and prayer ; so that when this day came, few met together early in the morning and did not taste anything. We sat down sometimes in silence ; and as any found a concern on their spirits and inclination in their hearts they kneeled down and sought the Lord ; so that sometimes, before the day ended, there might be twenty of us pray, men and women ; on some of those occasions children spake a few words in prayer ; and we were sometimes greatly bowed

and broken before the Lord, in humility and tenderness."

The silence of these Seekers, "thirsty souls that hunger," was not an addition to their worship: it was an essential part of it.

"Their Silence came out of their Seeking, and their Seeking out of their Search for Reality."[1]

To these plastic communities of Seekers, George Fox was sent in the first divine fury of his prophetic mission. His strong soul acted as the signet to their gentle wax and stamped them with the indelible impression of Quakerism.

George Fox also had discovered in silence and in loneliness the path of receptivity that gradually widened out before him and became a broad highway along which thousands of liberated souls were to follow him as their leader.

Even in childhood he was noted as being "religious, inward, *still*, solid and observing beyond his years."[2] "When at the age of twenty he left his home and friends he sought for light in solitude and silence, and often walked

[1] W. C. Braithwaite.

[2] W. Penn. Preface to G. Fox's *Journal*.

in the Chace to wait upon the Lord." From the silent musings of his own soul he went on to the silent Seekers: "the most retired and religious people . . . who waited for the consolation of Israel night and day."

"At this time he taught and was an example of silence, endeavouring to bring people from self-performances, to the light of Christ within them, and encouraging them to wait in patience to feel the power of it to stir in their hearts. . . . Accordingly several meetings were gathered in those parts"—gathered, apparently, rather through the convincing reality of his silence than through any eloquence of preaching, since, as William Penn notes in a pregnant sentence, "his more ample ministry was not yet come upon him." Yet, doubtless, then as later, he knew how to "speak a word in due season especially to them that were weary and wanted soul's rest, being deep in the Divine mysteries of the Kingdom of God . . . whereby many were convinced of their great duty of inward retiring to wait upon God, and as they became diligent in the performance of that service were also raised to be preachers." Note how emphatically the spoken word is here made to depend upon the diligent use of silence

Very early in George Fox's career came the memorable day when, accompanied by an "old priest" he went to a "great meeting with professors of various sorts," where, instead of arguing or declaiming or even trying to expound his new vision of truth, he says, "I sate on a haystack and spake nothing for some hours, for I was to famish them from words. The professors would ever and anon be speaking to the old priest and asking him when it would begin. . . . He bade them wait and told them that the people waited a long time upon Christ before He spoke" (an interesting gospel sidelight, this, upon the Way of Wonder). "At last I was moved of the Lord to speak; and they were struck by the Lord's power. The word of life reached to them and there was a general convincement among them."

But the priests and professors were not always reached by the silence. Another entry in the journal says: "The priests and professors of all sorts was much against Friends' silent meetings . . . and when they saw 100 or 200 of people all silent waiting upon the Lord they would break out into a wondering and despising and some of them would say: 'Look how this people sits mumming and dumming,

what edification is here where there is noe words?' 'Come,' would they say, 'let us begone, what should we stay here to see a people sett of this manner,' and they said they never saw the like in their lives."[1]

There seems to have been a strange sifting power in these silences of Fox, and in the weighty words that at length issued thence. Silence, with him, was obviously not merely a way of worship but the actual path of prayer itself.

"Above all," Penn says, "Fox excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behaviour, and the fewness and fulness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration, as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say, was his in prayer." [2]

Fox says himself, "Such as know the peace of God, that passeth the understanding, and that which is unspeakable, they know silence in the life and in the Spirit of God."[3]

[1] *Journal*, Camb. Ed., II., 28.

[2] W. Penn. Preface to G. Fox's *Journal*.

[3] "Gospel Truth Demonstrated."

The effect of one unexpected silence of his on the Seekers who flocked to Preston Patrick Chapel to hear the new prophet in 1652, can still be felt in the contemporary narrative.[1]

"And it having been a common practice amongst the said seeking and religiously inclined people to raise a general meeting at Preston Patrick Chapel once a month upon the fourth day of the week, to which resorted the most zealous and religious people in several places adjacent, . . .where Francis Howgill, John Audland and several others did usually preach to the congregation there met. . . . Thither G. F. went being accompanied with J. A. & J[ohn C[amm]. J. A. would have had G. F. to have gone into the place or pew where usually he and the preacher did sit, but he refused and took a back seat near the door, and J. C. sat down by him, where he sat silent, waiting upon God about half an hour, in which time of silence F. H. seemed uneasy, and pulled out his bible and opened it, and stood up several times, sitting down again and closing his book, a dread and fear being upon him that he durst not begin to preach. After the said silence and waiting

[1] *First Publishers of Truth*, edited by Norman Penney, F.S.A., p. 244.

G. F. stood up in the mighty power of God and in the demonstration thereof was his mouth opened to preach Christ Jesus, the Light of Life and the way to God, and Saviour of all that believe and obey Him . . . which was delivered in that power and authority that most of the auditory, which were several hundreds, were effectually reached to the heart and convinced of the truth that very day, for it was the day of God's power."[1]

Later on, in 1663, the Journal tells how "at Wellingboro' in Northamptonshire the town's officers warned friends to come to the steeple-house, and they met together to consider of it, and the Lord moved them to go to their steeple-house to meet in . . . . And when they came into the steeple-house they all sat down together and waited upon the Lord in his power and spirit and minded the Lord Jesus Christ their teacher and Saviour and did not mind the priest. So the officers came to them to put them out of the steeple-house : and they said 'Nay, it was not time for them to break up their meeting yet,' and so the priest when he had done his stuff they would have had friends go home to Dinner ; and they told

[1] *Journal*, Camb. Ed., II., 32.

them they did not use to goe to Dinner but was feeding upon the bread of life. And there they sat, waiting upon the Lord, enjoying his power and presence till he ordered them to depart." This is, I think, the first recorded "Quiet Meeting" in an English church.

In *First Publishers of Truth* (the account of the earliest Quaker preachings and convincements sent up from different counties in England) scattered indications show that from the very beginning not only what Friends said, but also what they did not say, their silence, effectually "reached" their opponents. These accounts also show that the habit of silent waiting upon God was so entirely a matter of course in Quaker worship that it was never described or explained. That Friends practised it in their worship was taken for granted, whatever astonishment the absence of prepared words or set prayers might cause to the world outside.

On one of the first pages of the volume a report from Bedfordshire states that in the year 1654 "some were in part convinced . . . and did not much consult with flesh and blood, but soon put in practice the Doctrine of the Cross and . . . met together, when but five or six in number, to wait upon God in

Silence, and the Lord blessed us with his presence and gave us the spirit of Discerning, that in measure the ear tasted words as the palate meat."

In Cumberland it is recorded that one John Grave "received truth in the year 1654, being invited by a friend to a sylent meet in which God's heavenly power broke in upon him whereby he was wonderfully shaken insomuch that he was constrained to cry out against the many gods in Egypt. He was a faithful minister of Christ."[1]

In Cornwall, after the earliest Publishers, arrived Thomas Curtis, the linendraper of Reading, "encouraging friends to faithfulness. By this time we were Preetty many gathered in this place to sit down in Silence and wait upon the Lord, and we had many good and compfortable seasons and meetings at this time where we felt the alone Teacher nigh us administering to our spiritual wants, by whom we were enabled both to wait and suffer for his Blessed Truth and Name's sake." [2]

From Gloucester comes the illiterate yet graphic account of the first meeting gathered there; "and when it was gathered we sat

[1] *First Publishers of Truth*, 43. [2] *Ibid*, 22.

a prete while and then Christfor Houldar stod up and said, 'Be singell my frindes, be singell' and did direckt us to the Light and spirit of God in our hartes, and, as we did waite low in Godes feare, so that we may receive powr from him to doe his will, and soe went on very safrey, which did Refresh our emortall soules."[1]

But the most insistent of all these heralds of silent waiting was that mysterious man who is described as a "Servant of the Lord but a strainger outwardly, called Thomas Parrish, but of what parts no account can be given now." He came in to a meeting of Independents at Leominster on a first day of the week in 1655.

"And after some time he had Waited on the Lord in spirit, he had an opportunity to speak, all being silent; he said by way of exhortation 'Keep to the Lord's watch.' These words being spake in the power of God, had its operation upon all or most of the Meeting, so that they felt some great dread or fear upon their spirits, and being silent for some space of time, some thought to have spake as usually to the Meeting, but could not because of the unusual awe

[1] *Ibid*, 110.

that was on their spirits. So after a little time he spake again saying 'What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch,' then was silent again a little time, but the whole Meeting, being sensible that this man was in some extraordinary spirit and power, were all musing what manner of teaching this should be, being such a voice that most of the hearers never heard before, that carried such great authority with it that they were all necessitated to be subject to the power, though it was a great Cross to their wills to sit in silence though it was but a little time." "Then he spake again, 'Where are your minds now? wandering abroad? or in the Spirit watching with the Lord?' Then he went on and opened the great mystery of God's salvation, turning their minds to the spirit of Christ by which some of them know he spake the truth in the inward parts, which was the light shined in their hearts."[1]

"A great cross to their wills to sit in silence." Hitherto silent worship may have seemed to be almost a kind of spiritual luxury. This astonished meeting of Independents, constrained against their will to abstain from words, is an early example of the ascetic power of silence.

[1] *Ibid*, 115.

It may end by becoming a luxury, but it usually begins by being a discipline.[1]

The same spirit that constrains to words, when a living message is given, restrains the lips from utterance when it is withheld.

Even the earliest nick-names of the Quakers bore witness to the mighty inrushes of spiritual power that shook their feeble physical frames with travail pangs in the delivery of their message: Quakers, Tremblers, they were called. Yet these same convulsed and shaken people remained at other times for long hours together in such rapt and utter stillness that their enemies

[1] Compare *The Life of Christopher Story*. p. 21.

"After several meetings amongst us, and divers convinced, we were advised to keep a meeting to wait upon the Lord, though there were none to speak words; so we agreed to have a meeting at my house in the year 1672. Being but a few, we concluded to have it in an upper room of mine; and when we sat down together, I may say I was hard beset to keep my mind from running hither and thither after the transitory things of this world; and a great warfare I had for the greatest part of the meeting. Yet near the conclusion, those vain thoughts vanished, and . . . I was wonderfully comforted in my spirit, and my inward man renewed in a sense of the Lord's nearness; and being on this wise encouraged, we kept to our silent meetings, and report went abroad that we had settled a meeting; and several came and sat down among us; and when there was a public friend we mostly had the meeting without doors; but when only ourselves, in that upper room.

And as our love to the Lord increased, so our care increased in keeping to our silent meetings, Glorious and heavenly times we had, when no words."

accused them of not worshipping at all, but " just mumming and dumming."

This strange double experience, the convincing Power of the given Word, the no less convincing power of silence when all words were withheld, the early Quaker philosophers were bound, by their very familiarity with it in practice, to try, theoretically, to explain.

Robert Barclay, in the *Apology* insists on the " wonderful and glorious dispensation " of which he can speak from certain experience and not from mere hearsay when " though there be not a word spoken, yet is the true spiritual worship performed and our souls have been greatly edified and refreshed and our hearts wonderfully overcome with the secret sense of God's power and Spirit which without words have been ministered from one vessel to another."[1]

Yet he too dwells on the discipline of the silence to " the mere natural man, who will be apt to judge all time lost where there is not something spoken that is obvious to the outward senses." " There can be nothing more opposite to the natural will and wisdom of man than this *silent waiting upon God* . . . And therefore it was not preached, nor can be so

[1] *Apology*, xi. 6.

practised, but by such as find no outward ceremony, no observations, no words, yea, not the best and purest words, even the words of scripture, able to satisfy their weary and afflicted souls. Such were necessitated to cease from all externals and to be silent before the Lord . . . and to cease from their own forward words and actings, in the natural willing and comprehension, and feel after this inward seed of life that, as it moveth they may move with it, and be actuated by its power, and influenced, whether to pray, preach or sing. And so from this principle of man's being silent, and not acting in the things of God of himself, until thus actuated by God's light and grace in the heart, did naturally spring that manner *of sitting silent together and waiting together upon the Lord* . . . . and thus we are often greatly strengthened and renewed in the spirit of our mind without a word, and we enjoy and possess the holy fellowship and communion of the body and blood of Christ. . . . . For this is that cement whereby we are joined, as to the Lord, so to one another, and without this none can worship with us."

In this quotation Barclay clearly shows that

to the early Friends silence was never an end in itself. What they felt to be necessary was "silent waiting upon God," with a *crescendo* of emphasis upon the last words. The outward silence in their meetings did not indicate passivity but rather a tense activity of soul, akin to that described in a much earlier mystical treatise of the fourteenth century, the *Pystle of Private Counsel*, which says "Look that nothing live in thy working mind" in prayer, "but a naked intent stretching."[1]

Thus evidently the "Silent Waiting upon God" enjoined by the early Quakers was far from being quietistic, in the baneful sense of that word. In a way it was nearer to the advice of Ignatius Loyola to his followers: "Pray as if all depended on your prayer, and act as though all depended on your action;" or to Brother Lawrence possessing God "in great tranquillity" amid the noise and clatter of his kitchen.[2] Yet apart from

[1] In *The Second Period of Quakerism* (p. 388 note) W. C. Braithwaite points out that the Hebrew word meaning "wait for" "had probably the root idea of twisting or stretching, and so of the tension of enduring or waiting. Accordingly it had by no means merely a passive sense, but was an active stretching out of the soul before God."

"[2] Different centuries have been marked in ecclesiastical as in social history by great differences in the

the undue stress on passivity implied in the name "Quietism,"—which may be partly due to the fact that much of our knowledge of the Quietists is derived from the accounts of their antagonists,—apart from this, there is much true and beautiful counsel in the writings of Miguel Molinos, that is indistinguishable from the spirit of Quakerism.[1] Compare for example these two sentences, the first by the great Quietist, Molinos, the second by the great Quaker, William Penn. Molinos says in *The Spiritual Guide:* "Just as the body needs sleep in order to recruit its energies, so does the soul require a silent resting in the presence of God. For in this rest God will speak and the soul will hear." Whereas Penn, in the *Fruits of a Father's Love* (his advice to his children published after his death), uses the same image and almost

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drift and tendency of ideas. Our many-sided human nature tends to develop itself by the exaggerated growth of one side at a time; and this tendency exhibits itself in great secular movements, such as were, for example, the great movement of the fourth century in the direction of monasticism, or the great movement of the sixteenth [and seventeenth] century in the direction of simplicity of worship." E. Hatch, *Bampton Lectures* p. 10. It is surely significant that Fox, Molinos and Brother Lawrence all lived in the same century.

[1] See note D. (p. 94).

the same words: "Love silence even in the mind; for thoughts are to that as words to the body, troublesome: much speaking as much thinking, spends; and in many thoughts as well as words there is sin. True silence is the rest to the mind, and is to the spirit what sleep is to the body; nourishment and refreshment. It is a great virtue, it covers folly, keeps secrets, avoids disputes and prevents sin."

The difference between the two teachers was a practical one. To the Quaker, the silence in his worship must be free, and not compulsory. There must always be full liberty to speak. Herein he parted company with the Molinist and with innumerable other followers of silence, before and since, by insisting that there must be absolute freedom to deliver the message if, and when, it is given. Isaac Penington scrupulously guards this liberty when he says:

"For absolutely silent meetings (wherein there is a resolution not to speak) we know not; but we wait on the Lord, either to feel him in words, or in silence of spirit without words, as he pleaseth. And that which we aim at, and are instructed to by the Spirit of the Lord as to silent meetings, is that the flesh in everyone be kept silent, and that there be

no building up, but in the Spirit and power of the Lord."[1]

Nevertheless that Penington was himself a lover of the silent way is obvious from a later paragraph where he says: "Now to evidence that the Lord doth require these silent meetings . . . it may thus appear. God is to be worshipped in spirit, in His own power of life. . . . His church is a gathering in the spirit. . . . If any man speak there he must speak. . . . as the vessel out of which God speaks; as the trumpet out of which he gives the sound. Therefore there is to be a waiting in silence, till the Spirit of the Lord move to speak, and also give words to speak. . . . And seeing the Spirit inwardly nourisheth when he giveth not to speak words, the inward sense and nourishment is to be waited for, and received as it was given when there are no words. Yea, the ministry of the Spirit and life is more close and immediate when without words, than when with words, as has been often felt, and is faithfully testified by many witnesses."[2]

These passages show unmistakably that

[1] *The Nature, Use, Intent, and Benefit of Silent Meetings*, by Isaac Penington.

[2] *Ibid.*

Penington and Barclay and their contemporaries had found in the depths of united silence "the stillness of the central sea,"[1] calm and unruffled within the troubled heart of man. To use Penington's own words, they enjoyed "the stillness, the quietness, the satisfiedness of the life in God."

In those early days "all things were made new." As George Fox writes: "Now was I come up into the Paradise of God where all the creation gave another smell beyond what words can utter."

Alas! that this glorious vision too swiftly faded. After the tender colours of the dawn, after the magical sunrise, the passionate flush and fervour of the first Publishers of Truth, there followed a chill grey morning that passed into a monotonous mid-day.

Even a kindly critic says: "It is not possible to whitewash eighteenth century Quakerism"[2] and "Dead mysticism can be as much an earth cumberer as dead evangelicalism or dead ritualism." Quakerism in its second phase was often very dead. Silent worship at its worst is probably as artificial as the most ornate

[1] Tennyson.

[2] John Wilhelm Rowntree: *C. E. Stephen and the Society of Friends.*

ceremony, and is possibly even less profitable to the soul. How it can degenerate may be seen in some of the dead-alive meetings that still remain with us to-day as a legacy from those long decades of spiritual torpor.

In a certain small town in the West of England, the fisher folk were wont to explain, only a year or two ago, that the disused meeting house behind its padlocked gateway was the property of "They Quakers," and to add "They just came here and sat and sat, and nobody never said nothing, until at last they all died and so they gave it up." While, in the North of England, a party of "tramping" Friends on asking a countryman to attend a meeting were met by the pointed enquiry, "What is the good of going to listen to folks as has nowt to say?"

In such meetings silence has ceased to be a true Way at all. No longer can it remind us that the followers of Jesus (before ever they had been nick-named "Christians" in distant Antioch) were described familiarly as followers of "The Way," their Master's "Way" of living —and of dying. Dead silence leads nowhere. It is not a way, but a wall, a barrier, a padlocked door.

Yet even though the silence of the larger meetings was, in the eighteenth century, too often cold and formal, testimonies to the living power of our way of worship are still to be found in the biographies of many lowly people,—long forgotten saints on whose memories it is pleasant to dwell for a few moments. Listen to the account of the convincement of James Sheppard, in 1782.

"At the above meeting at Birr, thro' the ministry of Thomas Wilson, there was also convinced his wife's daughter Mary, the wife of James Sheppard. This was a great mortification to her husband who tried various means to reclaim her. At length a noted preacher being to preach at the worship-house he frequented, he proposed to his wife, that if she would go with him to hear him, he would go with her next Sunday (as he called it) to the meeting at Birr, to which proposal she assented. She went accordingly, and heard fine words and eloquence: but that was not what her soul wanted.

"Next first-day, pursuant to his engagement, he went with her to Birr. It proved to be a silent meeting there: yet through the reverent attendance of the souls of those present upon Christ the best minister, they were favoured together with

his life-giving presence, with the sense of which the said James was reached, and tendered into contrition in the sight of the self-denying path cast up to peace with God. Hereupon, what he little expected at his going to that meeting, he immediately joined in society with friends and became a serviceable man in his station." [1]

Again in the testimony to one Richard Jordan, written after his death in 1826, it is said that: "His reverent humble waiting and deep exercise of spirit, in his silent sitting in our meetings, was instructive, and at times had a reaching effect upon the minds of those around him." His own journal records some years previously that, "In the evening, on returning to our lodgings, we found a number of Friends who had come in to see us, and after a time of pleasant conversation being drawn into stillness I was opened in Testimony, and it proved a precious opportunity, like the distilling of the precious dew of heaven upon our spirits."

[1] From account of John Ashton, in *Life of James Gough*, 1782. Quaker annals also record the case of a man—an unbeliever—whose casual attendance at a meeting held in unbroken silence led to his conversion. "If they had said anything, I could have answered them" was his own tribute to the convincing power of the silence. See *Light Arising*, by C. E. Stephen, p. 63.

To an eighteenth century Friend, John Bellers, moreover, we owe one of the most beautiful and searching descriptions of true silent worship. " The silence of a religious and spiritual worship is not a drowsy, unthinking state of the mind, but a sequestering or withdrawing of it from all visible objects and vain imaginations into a fervent praying to or praising the invisible, omnipresent God in His light and love: His light gives wisdom and knowledge and His love gives power and strength to run the way of His commandments with delight. But, except all excesses of the body and passions of the mind are avoided, through watchfulness, the soul doth not attain true silence."[1]

With the nineteenth century came other dangers than sluggishness. That age was too much engrossed in new triumphs over the material resources of civilisation; too busy discovering the marvels of steam, of electricity; too much preoccupied with the world outside to care often to turn inward and listen for the silent voice. For the time, mysticism was at a discount; even worship became business-like.

[1] Quoted in *The Second Period of Quakerism*, by W. C. Braithwaite, p. 575.

To quote the words of its own poetess, Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

"The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.
For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous, wondrous age!'
Little thinking if we work our *souls* as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage!

Yet, even in the hurry scurry of the nineteenth century, silence still kept a few faithful lovers. There were gentle souls like Lamb, who, in his well-known essay on "A Quaker's Meeting," praised—

"Still-born Silence! Thou that art
Flood-gate of the deeper heart!"

and said "The Abbey Church of Westminster hath nothing so solemn, so spirit-soothing, as the naked walls and benches of a Quakers' meeting. Here are no tombs, no inscriptions, but here is something, which throws Antiquity herself into the foreground—SILENCE— eldest

of things, language of old Night— primitive discourser. . . . "

Lamb also bears witness that in his day " More frequently the Meeting is broken up without a word having been spoken. But the mind has been fed. You go away with a sermon not made with hands. You have bathed with stillness."

And not gentle spirits only. Thomas Carlyle, the rugged, tumultuous prophet, also sought refuge more than once in deathless praise of silence. Unfair though he sometimes was in his estimate of Quakers and Quakerism, he could write to his friend Caroline Fox: " If I had a Fortunatus' hat I would fly into deepest silence, perhaps into green Cornwall towards the Land's End, far from Babylon and its jarrings and its discords, and ugly fog and mud, in sight of the mere earth and sea, and the sky with its stars." [1]

Caroline Fox, herself not only a Friend but also a characteristic woman of the nineteenth century, nevertheless preserves something of the atmosphere of an earlier day when she writes in her journal: " How I like things to be done quietly and without fuss. It is the fuss and bustle principle, which must proclaim itself

[1] *Journals of Caroline Fox*, January, 1844.

till it is hoarse, that wars against Truth and heroism. Let Truth be done in silence till it is forced to speak, and then it should only whisper, all those whom it may concern to hear will hear." [1]

Not Caroline Fox, however, but her friend, another, greater, Victorian Caroline, was destined to become the guide who should recall the Society of Friends to the inheritance of its earlier days.

Caroline Stephen, the judge's daughter, Leslie Stephen's sister, had believed, as perhaps many people still believe vaguely, that "the Society was fast dying out," and "the 'silent worship' of tradition a thing of the past," when, she says "I first found myself within reach of a Friends' meeting, and, somewhat to my surprise, cordially made welcome to attend it."

Caroline Stephen had been passing through a long period of inward questioning as to the fundamental truths of religion. Her difficulties, she says, "were stirred into redoubled activity by the dogmatic statements and assumptions with which the [Church of England] Liturgy abounds. . . . Thus the hour of

[1] *Journals of Caroline Fox*, June, 1843. This recalls the Saying of the Chinese Sage: "It is the way of Heaven not to speak; yet it knows how to obtain an answer."

public worship, which should have been a time of spiritual strengthening and calming, became to me a time of renewed conflict, and of occasional exaltation and excitement of emotion, leading but too surely to reaction and apathy. . . .

"When lo! on one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers, who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. . . . My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at the least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven . . . the place of the most soul-subduing, faith-restoring, strengthening and peaceful communion, in feeding upon the bread of life, that I have ever known."

Later on, in speaking of the "extreme of sim-

plicity and freedom maintained in our own meetings," she says, " though I have no desire to conceal the too obvious fact that we continually fall far short of our ideal, I yet must avow my own conviction that that ideal of public worship is the purest which has ever been recognised, and also that it is practically identical with that which seems to have been recognised in the days of the Apostles."

And again: " The silence we value is not a mere silence of the lips. It is a deep quietness of heart and mind, a laying aside of all preoccupation with passing things . . . a resolute fixing of the heart upon that which is unchangeable and eternal."[1]

" Experience . . . proves the exceeding value of the habit of seeking after inward silence as a real life-discipline . . . And silence is assuredly an art to be acquired, a discipline to be steadily practised before it can become the instinctive habit and unfailing resource of the soul . . . to myself, the practice of quietness in life is markedly facilitated by the habit of joining in a worship ' based on silence.' "

[1] Compare and contrast with this Lord Morley's saying: " To the eternal silence of the divinities above, cold silence must be the only meet reply." *Recollections*, p. 18.

" In the united stillness of a truly ' gathered ' meeting there is a power known only by experience, and mysterious even when most familiar."

On the other hand, she says: " Of all the disturbing influences from without which hinder the consciousness of communion with God, I think that unwarranted words—words not freshly called forth by the united exercise of the moment—are the most disturbing."[1]

The dangers of Silent Worship: too well we know them. For this corporate stillness is " a very sensitive instrument and easily jarred." Too fragile for ordinary use, some may object. Fragility, however, is not always a drawback. It may be also an aid to security and strength.

I was once in a violent storm at sea when the wireless installation was swept away in the first fury of the gale. Had anything else gone, the ship could have sent out messages, and could have received directions as to how to place herself in the path of coming succour. But, with the wireless broken, she must needs drift dumb and deaf before the storm. Such an experience was not however a reason for

[1] The above quotations are taken from *Quaker Strongholds* and *Light Arising*, by C. E. Stephen.

starting on another voyage without any wireless installation at all: not a reason for saying that it was "too delicate for every-day needs." Rather it was an incentive to guard the treasure more carefully, so that, if another storm occurred, whatever else went overboard, at least the wireless should be safe, since nothing less sensitively and delicately receptive could discover the mighty invisible forces all round the boat and compel them to come to our aid.

During the last few years our Society has found itself in the centre of the fiercest storm that has ever raged on this earth. Our forefathers' system of wireless telegraphy might well have broken down and have been jettisoned as useless. But, on the contrary, the fierceness of the storm has proved to us anew that in our spiritual worship we possess "A chain of living links not made nor riven," because "It stretched sheer up through lightning, wind and storm, and anchored fast in heaven."

Wherever even two or three travellers towards the Celestial City meet together, there, if they wish, this silent, spiritual "wireless" can be installed. They may be shipwrecked voyagers, baling out water from a leaky boat

as they escape from a torpedoed ship; they may be serving on the battlefield or in a hut crowded with refugees. Or else, and perhaps most convincingly of all, they may be sharing in the never-to-be-forgotten meetings in some prison or convict settlement. Everywhere, those who have learned to use this silent Way discover how safely and surely it binds the seen with the Unseen.

And not those who travel in company only. The solitary occupant of the most solitary cell is no longer isolated when even the enforced silence can be used to bring him in touch with other spirits.[1] He too may know what Saint Augustine knew, that golden sunset evening at Ostia; what Francis Howgill discovered among the filth and clamour of crowded Newgate: how to "wait out of all visible things" and to "see and feel things unutterable beyond all demonstration or speech" as "the Life closed with my understanding and my Spirit listened in to Him."

[1] To assert that even enforced silence can become a means of communion with the Divine is not, however, by any means to justify the use of the "silent system" as a punishment. By their own spiritual privilege of silent fellowship Friends are especially bound to do their utmost to break down what one prisoner calls "the hell of silence," and of solitude, in our modern prisons.

Only the uninitiated remain sometimes puzzled by this Way. "Our gaoler cannot understand the silence in our meetings," writes a modern prisoner, "so he jangles his keys loudly all the time, that the stillness may be disturbed." Nevertheless the inward silence is too deep to be broken by any jangling keys.

In January, 1916, when a howling mob invaded Devonshire House, jumping on the forms, gesticulating violently and shouting lustily all through one of our mid-day meetings, the outer hubbub only accentuated the inner peace.

To have shared in that experience is to know, once for all and "past all doubting," that our silence is indeed not too fragile an instrument to bear the test of even a fierce storm.

No; for an example of the dangers of our worship, for a truly disturbed and unprofitable meeting, my thoughts go back, not to that experience, but to some of our large meetings for worship in Yearly Meeting itself. Have there not been times when many Friends have arisen in unbroken succession and have relieved their own minds by pouring forth individual messages, with scarcely a moment's pause between each speaker and the next, and with

no unselfish endeavour to find the central current of the meeting's thought ? [1]

Wordy meetings such as these are even more deadening, spiritually, than those other, fossilized meetings, where the wrong kind of silence prevails. For the wrong kind of silence is no less infectious than the wrong kind of words. It almost seems as if there must be both an evil microbe of silence, and an evil microbe of speech. Where either of these noxious germs invades the atmosphere of a gathering it can spread and multiply with alarming swiftness.

Ought not each Friend to consider, very seriously and solemnly, before attending one of those petrified meetings that are held too often in a dead silence, whether he or she is really ready in spirit to receive a message, and really willing to allow it to pass through truly surrendered lips, however unfitted and unworthy they may have seemed for the task beforehand ?

On the other hand, at one of the wordy meetings, each Friend who feels called upon to rise

[1] That this is not a peculiarly modern danger is shown by the following entry in Thomas Story's Journal in 1717. "It was a crowding time . . . there not being for the most part one minute's time between the end of one testimony and the beginning of another, an indecency I have ever disliked." See *The Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 545.

and deliver a lengthy discourse might question himself—or herself—most searchingly, as to whether the message could not be more lastingly given in the fewest possible words or even through his or her personality alone, in entire and trustful silence.

"Cream always must rise to the surface." True. But other substances rise to the surface besides cream; substances that may have to be skimmed off and thrown away before bodies and souls can be duly nourished. "Is my message cream or scum?"—may be an unusual and is certainly a very homely query. Still it is one that every speaker, in a crowded gathering especially, should honestly face. Some of the dangers of silent worship can best be guarded against by its instinctive courtesies.

More than once, of late years, the reading of the Epistle in the closing session of Yearly Meeting has been followed by a time of deep, convincing, truly heart-searching silence. The Way of Wonder has been revealed to us, stretching up and down into hitherto unimaginable heights and depths of divine-human personality. Not each single soul alone, but unitedly as a community, we have been pressing on to wonder, to reign, to rest in hitherto un-

discovered possibilities of consecration and of service. . . .

And then, with an almost physical wrench and jar, the steady drip-drip of unneeded words has broken the united silence; has, not interpreted it, but shivered it into a thousand fragments. The vision of heights and depths at which we had barely gazed has been swiftly withdrawn. We have found ourselves plodding again along the sadly familiar high-road, from threadbare metaphor to hackneyed text; and back again. Is that too dreary a picture? I hope it may be. Let us set ourselves to disprove it during this coming Yearly Meeting. For after all it depends not on any beautiful theories but on our actual experience to-day whether our way of worship justifies itself or not.

Silent worship can only prove itself to be a real way, real to us, not only to our forefathers, if it does truly lead us too within the veil, enabling us also to enter that Holy of Holies where each soul is initiated into its own true inheritance of priesthood, in the presence of the Divine.

"Ours the mighty ordination of the piercéd Hands."

If this claim of ours,—the highest of all claims, to the burden and the joy of ministry,—if this

claim cannot be justified, we have no other. No outward ceremony exists for us wherewith to enforce it or to clothe our spiritual nakedness. Catholic critics say that " the drawback to most Protestant worship is that it never culminates," that it " does not arrive." Do we arrive? Does our way lead us to any central shrine? If not, however pleasant to traverse, it proves itself to be nothing better than a *cul-de-sac* since it leads no-whither. We must honestly face these questions if we are to be justified in following our own more or less isolated track instead of joining any of the larger companies of pilgrims on other, more famous, roads.

" Within man," says Emerson, " is the soul of the whole; the wise silence." " The tone of seeking is one, and the tone of having is another."

Are we still seekers on this way? Or have we at least begun to find?

Driving across the Yorkshire moors some years ago, I remember being puzzled by the sight of paving stones in unexpected places. How came they there? There are no paving stones on our Northumbrian moors. Gradually they became more frequent, were laid closer together till before long the remains of an old flagged pathway were shown, unmistakably, leading

over the heather. Could such a pathway end in a *cul-de-sac?* Surely no one would have taken the trouble to plant those carefully transported stones in orderly succession on these lonely uplands out of caprice, or without an earnest purpose as a guide?

My thoughts went back to Venice: I remembered once, years ago, having been lost in a tangle of narrow *calle* and *vicoli*. When I enquired the way, I was told to look down and follow the line of black stones in the pavement of the streets, and it would lead me direct to the Rialto: the busy bridge of chafferers and merchandize, the centre of the city's life.

"By their deeds they shall be justified, and by their deeds they shall be condemned." These old transplanted paving-stones on the Yorkshire moors still bear silent witness to a deeper yearning of the human spirit. Following their guidance, in days long ago, pilgrims were led not to any huckstering place of traffic, however central, but to their true shrine and goal, Whitby Abbey, uplifted on its stately headland above the Northern sea.

Now, centuries later, scattered over hill and dale, signs of that old pathway are still visible. The moors left behind, it runs by the side of the

modern high road, lonely, a little apart, yet clear and unmistakable in purpose. Stones from it are often missing; here and there are gaps where the flagged pathway is lost or can be but dimly discerned. Yet, once seized of its idea and meaning, once possessed of the clue, the eye seeks for the missing stones and discovers them in unexpected places. They may have been taken and built in to form part of a boundary wall. They may have become the threshold of a cottage, or the lowest step of a stile, but no odd modern uses can obliterate their ancient purpose. To the seeking eye they still preserve, safely and surely, the promise of the Central Shrine.

In like manner with our quest.

Why dare we follow silence in our worship, trusting that it too will lead us to some certain goal? Surely because it also appeals to something central in our human personality, because it is a path of approach, true and verified by centuries, to the inmost shrine of the Will.

A Quaker writer states truly that: "The central assault of Quakerism is to the Will." This is the essence of our Peace Testimony. We dare not avail ourselves of carnal weapons which, at best, can only enforce outer submission.

The whole object of the challenge of our Peace is to change the will of the sinner, since, in the long run, nothing else avails.

Hence also Quakerism in its worship does not use art or music by which to reach the soul through the gateways of the outer senses, or even of the emotions. It does not provide for learned discourses that shall appeal to the intellect. (Perhaps our danger in the past has been that we have paid too little heed to the command to love God with all our *minds*).

Leaving all these aside as non-essentials Quakerism deliberately bases its worship on silence, because that has proved effectual in reaching the inmost shrine of the Will, the true citadel of personality. In silence and in the ministry of the word that is born in silence, Quakerism finds its highest, because simplest, expression of human will-power surrendered to the Divine: "the body breaking into speech at the burning touch of the Spirit." [1]

From this central appeal of silence to the Will comes the possibility of both development and unity. Science teaches that there are certain crystals that can only attain to their perfect form in stillness. It teaches also that the

[1] Dixon Scott.

smallest crystal of any kind will grow into a larger crystal if suspended in a saturated solution of its own substance with one added condition : perfect stillness.

Therefore in obedience to a similar law of the spiritual world we dare to plunge our little fragments of personality—these tiny individual selves of ours—into the stillness of Communion, in order that thereby we may grow into a larger, more perfect whole.

In this uniting power of silence the goal at last comes in sight. Where opinions differ, silence unites. Thought is, and must be, dividing, while the minds and souls of men are formed in such different moulds and trained on such differing patterns through long years of differing experience. And therefore never were the children of men more hopelessly sundered in their opinions than to-day when, as never before, the whole race of mankind is heart-sick with longing for a deeper, more abiding fellowship than has ever yet been known.

Unity will never come, can never come, on the intellectual plane. Elsewhere it must be sought, where alone it can be found. Bishop Creighton's pithy saying : " My beloved Nonconformist brethren, we differ nowhere

*except in opinion*" is more than ever true to-day.

Yet amid all the clash and jar of opinions, of nations and of creeds, the "hidden unity in the Eternal Being"[1] still remains, waiting to be revealed. "Nothing but silence can heal the wounds made by disputations in the region of the Unseen."[2]

This healing power of silence is no longer a dream, a hope, a possibility merely, but in part already an accomplished fact.

All over the world scattered groups of worshippers are coming together to testify unconsciously to this hidden unity, and to make it manifest by their acceptance of the inward approach to God in silence. In numbers of Anglican churches in both hemispheres the "Quiet Meeting" is a regular event, and the "Fellowship of Silence" proves to be a living way of access to God. The fact may not be generally known that in the spring of 1918, when the bitterness of feeling among different sections of Irishmen had reached a degree unparalleled for centuries, Nationalists, Unionists and Sinn Feiners were able to meet together in the cathedral of St. Patrick at Dublin for half an hour of

[1] George Fox. [2] C. E. Stephen.

silent worship. In silence the underlying unity prevailed, although any spoken words might have shattered the assembly into irreconcilable fragments.

Beyond this even, still further afield, in Pekin, a little group of worshippers regularly hold their Quiet meeting; while in thought-divided India, the healing power of silence is also being manifested and felt. A short time ago the Christian students in the College at Allahabad determined to meet together daily for a time of silent fellowship in the Chapel. At once some of the Buddhist and Mohammedan students asked leave to join them. "Daily now," I am told, "Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists join together in silence before the All Father: What questions this awakens, and what joy it evokes."

If silence be able to do as much as this, here and now, does it not foreshadow, in the prophet's words, "a future and a hope" of yet greater victories to come? True, this future silence of Reunion may not be, probably will not be, exactly the same as the dear familiar Quaker silence of the past, but may become more and more "a silence of deep awe and wondering."[1]

[1] J. R. Lowell.

Or it may need to grow and expand and develop in innumerable other different directions, undreamed of as yet, before it can fitly clothe with its own seamless robe of unity the new spirit of the new age that is being born.

Yet all such changes and developments we should surely bless and welcome. The Way of Wonder has never been hedged in or regarded as private property. There are no notices of "Trespassers Beware!" above the Quaker fold, or of "No Thoroughfare" guarding our methods. Our claim is, that the Way of Wonder is not dominated by the right of way of any "ism," but that the duty, the privilege, and the joy of silent waiting upon God are universal.

Still now, as in the earliest days, we see in it a highway on which all seeking souls may find themselves to be in truth a band of companions. As they follow it they will recognise each other as fellow-pilgrims bound to one "*urbs beata*," even to that

> "New mansion of new people
> Where God's own life and light
> Promote, increase, make holy.
> Identify, unite."[1]

[1] "*O nova mansio, te, pia concio, gens pia munit,*
*Provehit, excitat, auget, identitat, efficit, unit.*"
Bernard of Morlaix.

Unbroken silence may, as our Anglican friends tell us, be a necessary stage on the road to unity, but, when once that unity has been known and felt, it will, our own history assures us, give birth to living, uniting words out of pure joy. The experience of Friends in the early days becomes in this way more, not less, valuable, as it points forward to the gathering into a larger unity of a more comprehensive whole. " Thus I say," concludes an old Quaker writer in 1670,[1] " that when or wherever Friends came together . . . and sat down in stillness and quietness . . . they came to find the benefit, advantage and glory thereof in a wonderful and unspeakable manner, for . . . they became all as one body—and as members of the body and one of another by reason of that wonderful and excellent and glorious unity. And so . . . Friends became greatly indeared to one another in all pureness and tenderness of love, and finding the great benefit and fellowship as of one being a strength to another . . . oft without all words, yea in the silence and ceasing of all words they . . . were inwardly refreshed,

[1] George Keith. *The Benefit, Advantage, and Glory Silent Meetings.*

comforted, quickened and strengthened through that communion and communication of the spirit and life of God . . . as from one upon all, and from all upon one."

" Communion and communication of the spirit and life of God . . . as from one upon all, and from all upon one."

This is our goal. To this, in spite of all our failures, we exist to bear witness. To this, the hope of the future, each living silence points.

Only, since the end of a journey is implied in its beginning, each silence points backward too, back to that earliest hush of awe on the evening of the Resurrection day. Then " the disciples and those that were with them" (we are told, which includes some women, surely), " believed not for joy, *and wondered* " to find their Risen Lord present with them, the doors being shut. Think of the silence of joy and wonder in that upper room ! Think of the utter stillness there, when not merely every word, but even every breath of His could be perceived, could change a life.

The Way of Wonder is no failure so long as it has power to lead even the weakest, most faint-hearted among us here, to that place of absolute surrender where He still stands

for ever in the Centre, waiting to inspire and bless.

In the Alpha and Omega of silence worshippers of all ages and of every race may find their unity. They are one with us, we are one with them even now, as, by power that is not of us, power breathed upon us, in us, through us, we are silently made aware that we are in the creative presence of God.

*Bamburgh,*
*June*, 1918.

## Notes

NOTE A.—"*Look with wonder at that which is before you.*"

This "Saying" of our Lord occurs in the following passage from the "Stromata" or "Miscellanies" of Clement of Alexandria: "The beginning of knowledge is wondering at things, as Plato says in the *Theætetus* and Matthias in the '*Traditions*' exhorting: 'Wonder at the things before you'; laying this down as the first step toward the knowledge that lies beyond." (Clem. Al. Strom. II. ix. 45.); and again

"In which connection also in the Gospel according to the Hebrews it is written: "He that hath wondered shall reign, and he that hath reigned shall rest. ὁ Θαυμάσας βασιλεύσει καὶ ὁ βασιλεύσας ἀναπαύσεται." (Clem. Al. Strom, II. ix. 45.).

In Strom. V. xiv. 96, the quotation is given more fully but without its source. "He that seeketh shall not cease until he find, and on finding he shall be amazed, and on being amazed he shall reign, and on reigning he shall rest."

Among the λόγια Ἰησοῦ discovered at Oxyrhynchus (Oxyrh. Pap. 654. vol. iv. p. 4) this saying is found in a form closely similar to Clement's version, and as he expressly assigns the saying Θαύμασον τὰ παρόντα to the same source, it follows that it also is a λόγιον Ἰησοῦ.

The above information is taken from Bishop Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (Appendix C), and from Dr. David Smith's *Unwritten Sayings of our Lord.*

NOTE B.—*Silence in Ancient Egyptian Worship.*

In *Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, by Professor J. H. Breasted, the following paragraphs occur:

"Thou O Amon art the lord of the silent,
Who cometh at the cry of the poor." (p. 351.)

Again:

"The surviving influence of the Aton faith and the doctrines of social justice of the Feudal Age now culminated in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries before Christ in the profoundest expression and revelation of the devotional religious spirit ever attained by the men of Egypt. . . . . Prayer becomes a revelation of inner personal experience, an expression of individual communion with God. It is a communion in which the worshipper discerns in his God one nourishing the soul as a shepherd feeds his flock." (p. 355.)

"Amon is a herdman herding him that leans upon him." "The lord of Truth he lives in Truth." (Inscriptions in the Hieratic character XXVI.B.Mus. Ostrakon No. 5656 11 6–7. 14. 15.)

"Thou sweet Well for him that thirsteth in the desert; it is closed to him who speaks, but it is open to him who is silent. When he who is silent comes, lo, he finds the Well." (Papyrus Sallier, 1. 8. 2–3.)

For kind help in tracing the above references I am indebted to Mrs. H. Sefton Jones, F.R.H.S.

NOTE C.—*Connection between the Mysteries and Christian worship.*

There are several interesting points of contact between the Mysteries (at Eleusis and elsewhere), and the ritual of Christian worship. It was the later Mystery Religions with their indoor rites of communion, that prepared the way for the Christian ritual observances rather than the open air sacrifices that went on outside the normal classical temple, accompanied as the latter were with hymn and dance and a hubbub of conversation among the worshippers. In contrast with these open air noisy rites of the state religion of Greece and Rome,

silence as an attribute of highest worship is characteristic of the Mysteries, which were as has been said generally nocturnal, indoor or even subterranean. Later on, during the persecutions, Christianity was also forced into hiding, and often driven underground as a condition of survival, or even of continued existence, (as for instance in the Catacombs of Rome), and this reinforced its natural sympathy with the Mystery Religions. Another interesting point of similarity is that both in the Mysteries and in the Christian Church the altar is placed at the inner end of the meeting house, whereas the Greek or Roman temple invariably had its altar in front, outside the building.

In the later history of Græco-Egyptian mysticism an extremely interesting example of Ritual Silence occurs in the so-called *Mithras-Liturgie*, although this is not strictly a liturgy, and can hardly represent the official Mithraic teaching. It is, rather, a Revelation, put by the writer in the mouth of Mithras, of the rites by which a worshipper may attain to the presence of the supreme God. In one "instruction" the novice is told what to do when as the result of his first prayer the Gods become visible to him and he to them. When they fix their eyes upon him and bear down upon him, he is to lay his forefinger on his mouth and say, "'Silence! Silence! Silence! Password of the living imperishable God! Guard me, O Silence!' . . . . . Then shalt thou see the Gods looking kindly upon thee, and no longer rushing upon thee, but going about their business."

So at later stages of the journey a prayer admits to each, and the same password, "Silence," keeps the intruder safe.[1]

I am indebted to my brother-in-law, Prof. R. C Bosanquet, for this information.

[1] A Dieterich, "*Eine Mithrasliturgie.*" p. 6.

NOTE D.—*Molinos and Quietism.*

Later Continental developments in the history of silent worship, after the rise of Quakerism in England, lie necessarily outside the scope of this book.

It has not therefore been possible to do more than allude in passing to the enigmatic and pathetic figure of Miguel Molinos, or even to mention the later Continental "Quietists," such as Mme. Guyon.

It would be interesting to discover whether the wave of spiritual thought that culminated in Quakerism in England had any actual connection with the Quietistic movement that spread like wildfire in Italy towards the end of the seventeenth century, when not only the laity but monks and nuns everywhere were said to be giving up their crucifixes, rosaries and images in order to practise the inner or silent prayer enjoyed by Molinos.

The Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Caraccioli, writing to the Pope in January, 1682, says:

"Lately there has been introduced at Naples, and as I hear also in other places, a frequent use of so called 'passive prayer' which is called by some the prayer of pure faith or of Quiet.

"They usually call themselves Quietists because they make use neither of meditation nor of vocal prayer, but, when they pray, remain as quiet and as silent as if they were dumb or dead."

Curiously enough, as all readers of *John Inglesant* will remember, this use of silent prayer far from superseding the outward use of the sacrament, as it did among the Quakers and the earlier continental "heretics," led instead to a much more frequent reception of it among the Molinists.

In the above quoted letter the Archbishop informs the Pope that the practice of daily communion among these Quietists is increasing largely and asks his advice as to what procedure to take against this new belief,

which is the cause of great trouble and offence. It was not until five years later, in 1687, that "the death knell of Quietism in the Roman Church was sounded," when after his recantation and the public condemnation of his errors, Molinos was taken into the little vaulted cell in which he was to undergo his sentence of life-long imprisonment.

But as he reached the threshold, which he probably never crossed again in life, he turned to the Dominican who accompanied him. "Good-bye, Father," he said, "we shall meet again on the Judgment day, and then it will be seen if the truth was on your side or on mine."

The following sentences illustrate well the spiritual nature of the silence enjoined by Molinos: "God calls and guides the soul to this inward solitude and mystical silence when he says that He will speak with her alone in the most secret and hidden part of the heart. Thou must enter into this mystical Silence if thou wouldest hear the sweet and divine Voice. . . . Rest in this mystical silence, and open the door, that so God may communicate himself unto thee, unite Himself with thee, and transform thee into Himself. The perfection of the soul consists not in speaking nor in thinking much on God, but in loving Him greatly: This love is acquired by means of perfect Resignation and inner silence, it all consists in deeds. The love of God has but few words." *Spiritual Guide*, I. 129, 130.

The translation of the *Spiritual Guide* published in the "Library of Devotion" series has prefixed to it a critical study of Miguel Molinos by Katherine Lyttelton, which is of great value to all who are interested in his life and thought, or in the history of Silent Worship.

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